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(54) NOZZLE WITH ISOLATION PORTING

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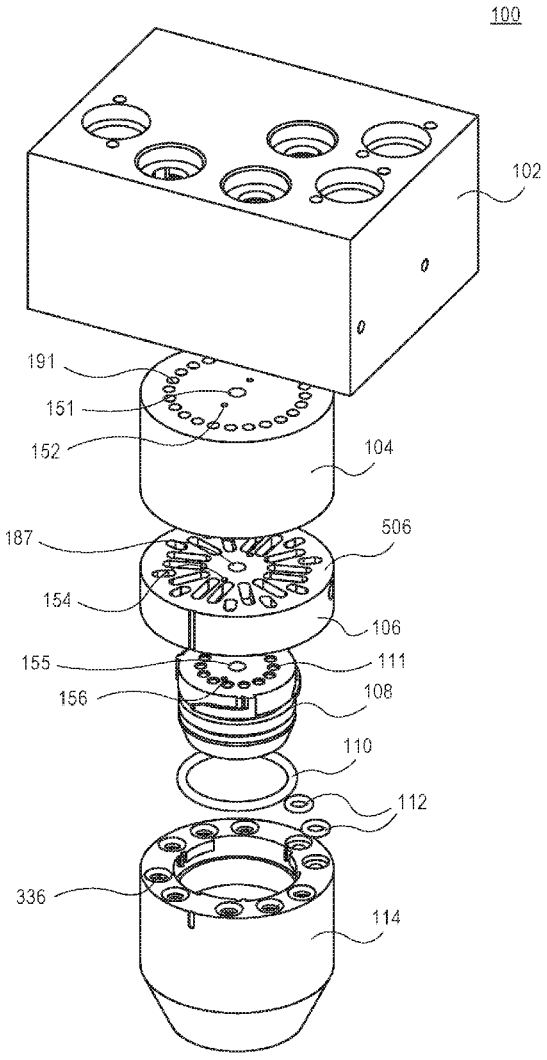
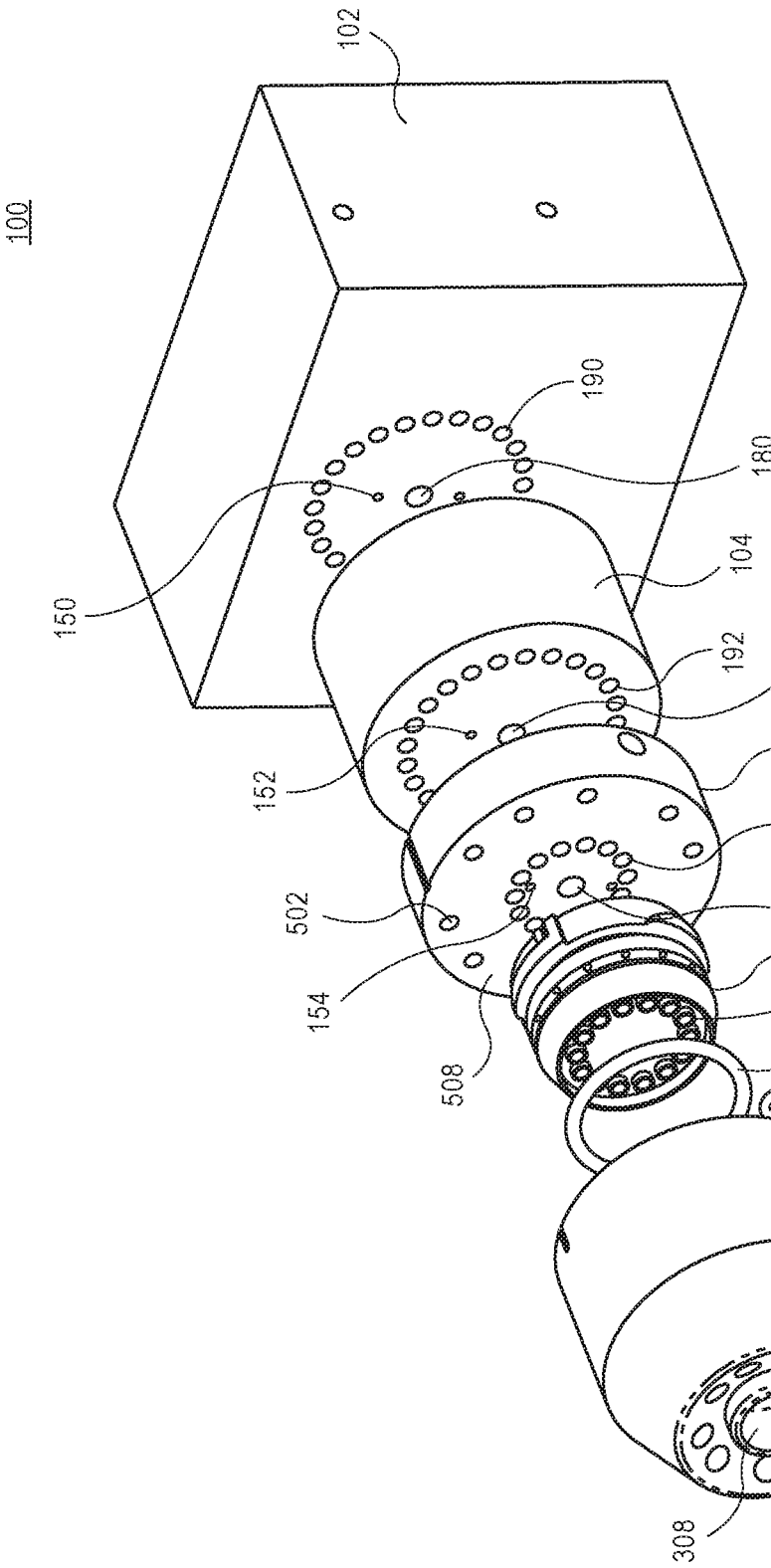
(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC ***B67D 1/0052*** (2013.01); ***B67D 1/0021*** (2013.01)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Disclosed is a beverage dispensing system for dispensing a non-mixed fluid along with a post-mix fluid. The post-mix fluid is formed by mixing a base beverage with at least one beverage additive. For example, the beverage dispensing system may dispense a post-mix fluid (e.g. cola) and a non-mixed fluid (e.g. spirits) separately. In some embodiments, the post-mix fluid may be dispensed simultaneously with the non-mixed fluid from separate fluid outlet ports. In other embodiments, the post-mix fluid may be dispensed from a first fluid outlet port and, subsequently, the non-mixed fluid may be dispensed from a second fluid outlet port.




100
102
190
180
150
104
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182
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106
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502
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154
108
196
508
110
112
114
306
308

FIG. 1A

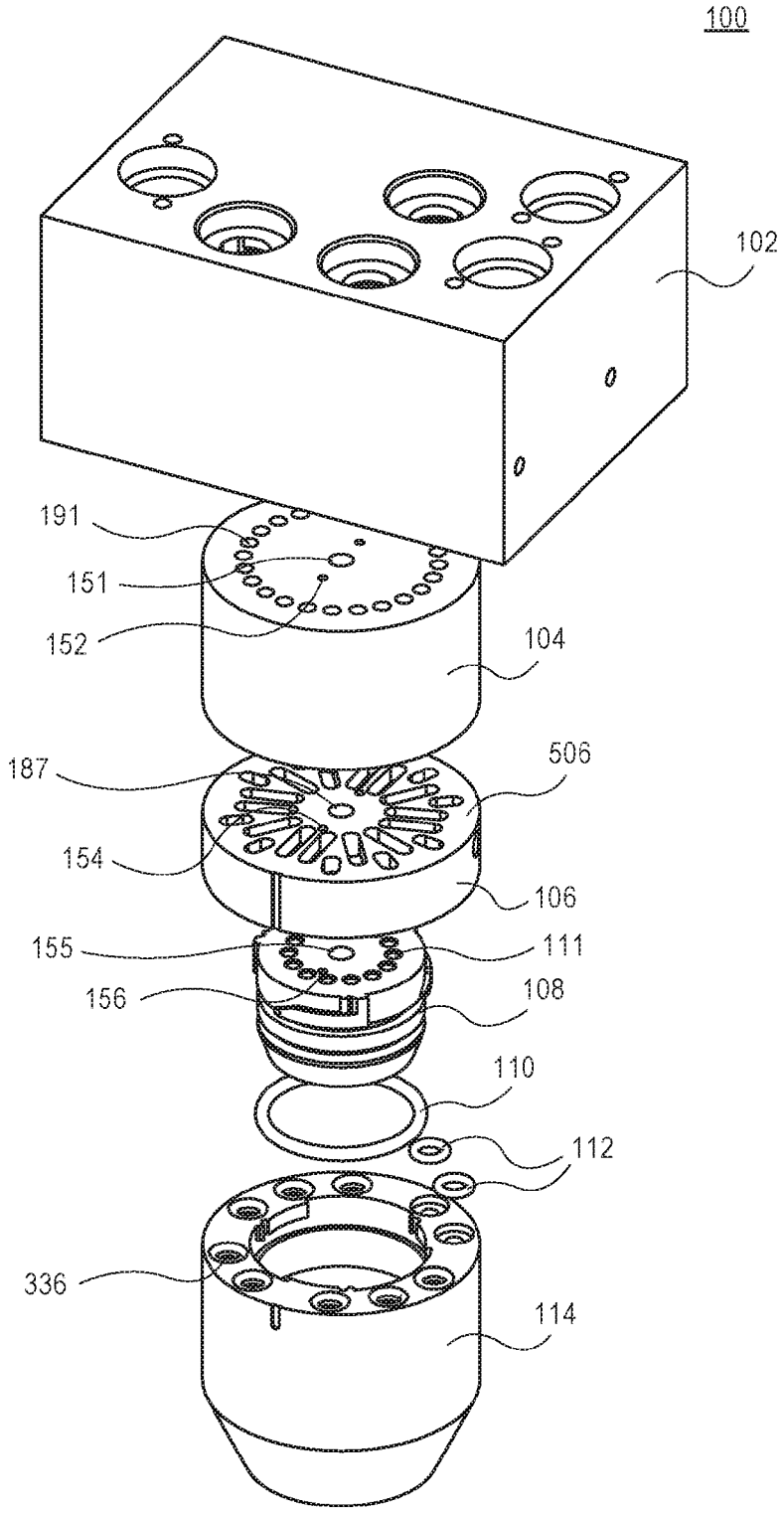

100
102
191
151
152
104
187
506
154
106
155
111
156
108
110
112
336
114

FIG. 1B

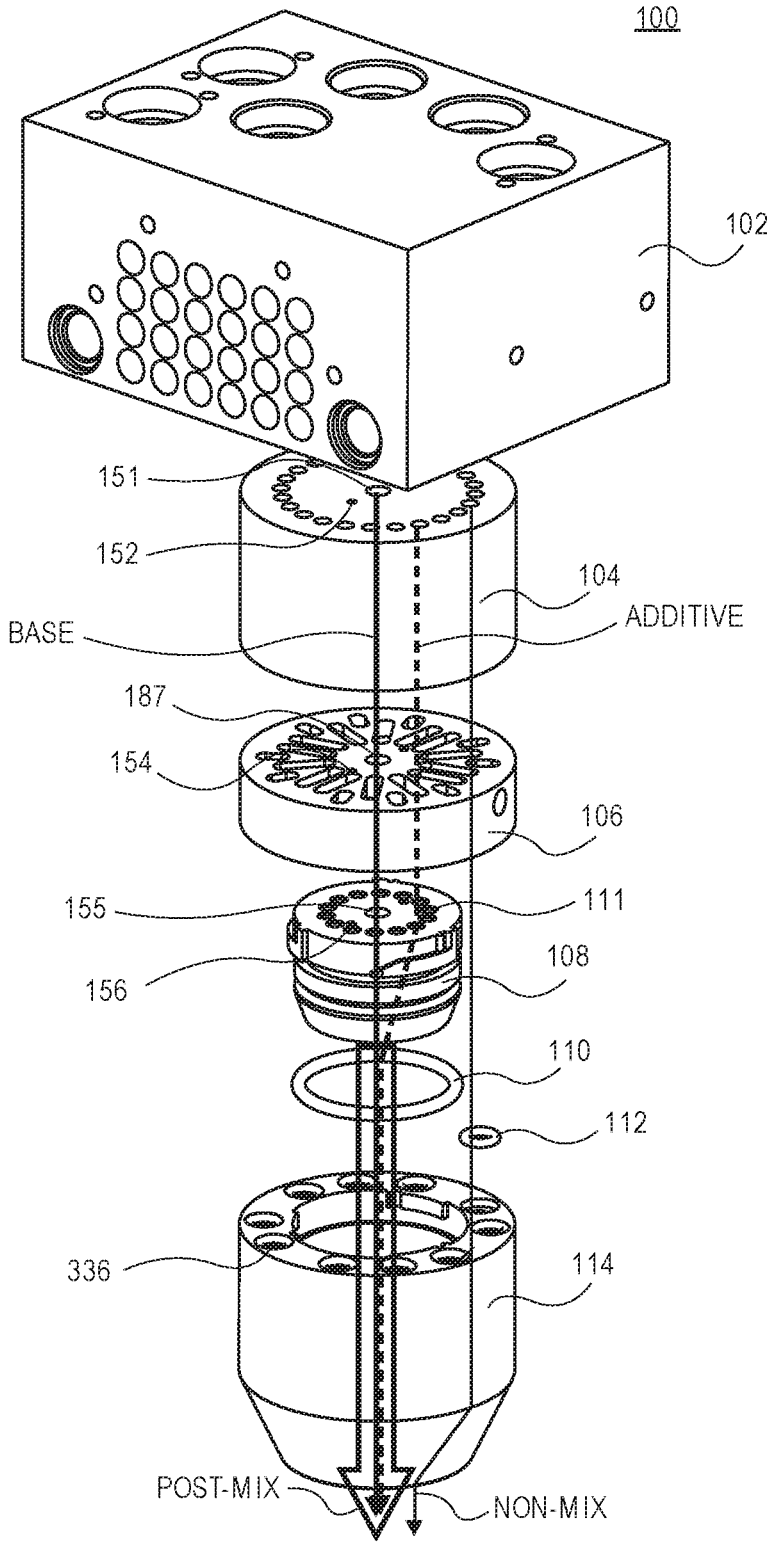

100
102
151
152
104
BASE
ADDITIVE
187
154
106
155
111
156
108
110
112
336
114
POST-MIX
NON-MIX

FIG. 1C

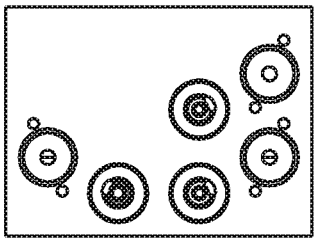


FIG. 2B

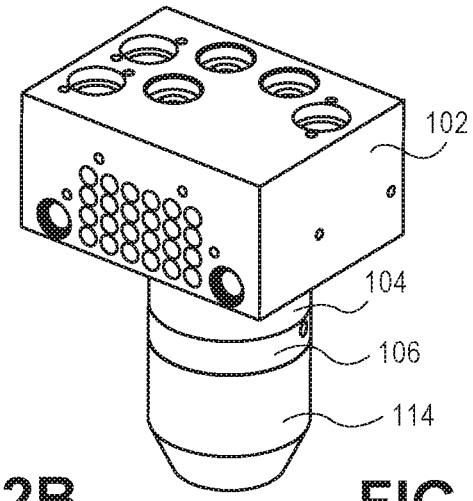


FIG. 2A

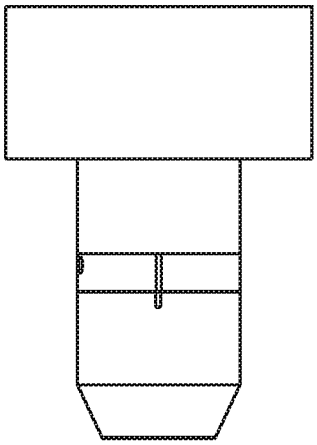


FIG. 2C

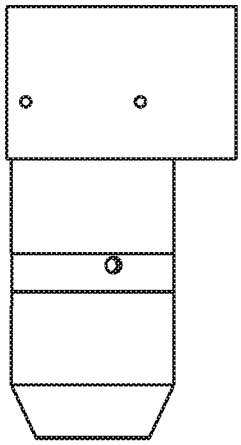


FIG. 2D

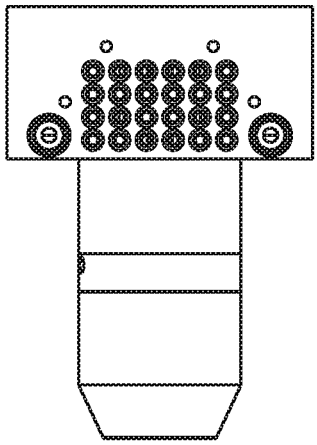


FIG. 2E

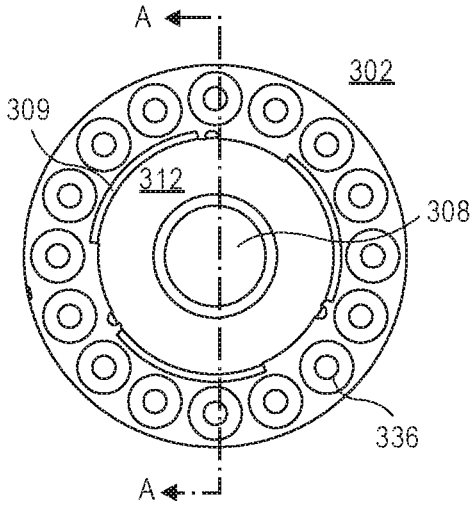


FIG. 3A

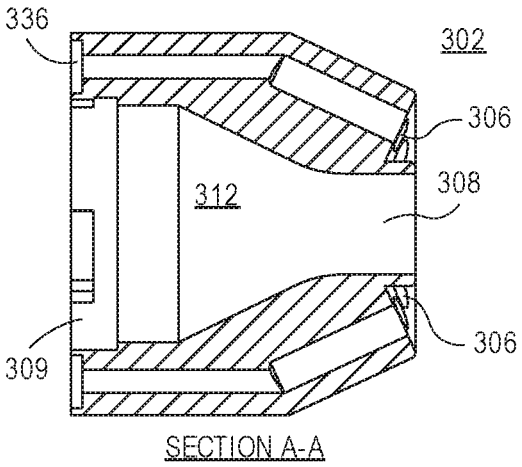


FIG. 3B

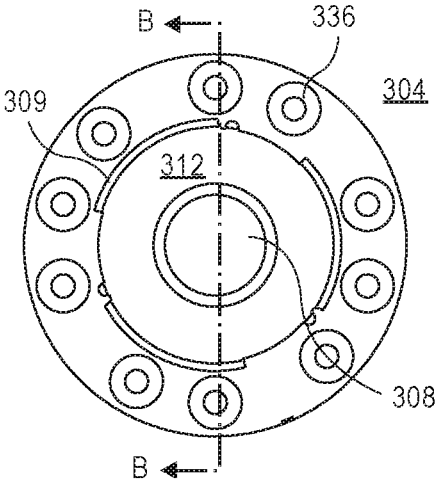


FIG. 3C

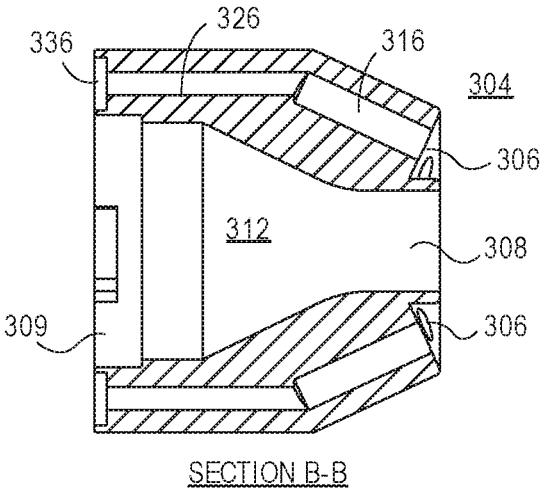


FIG. 3D

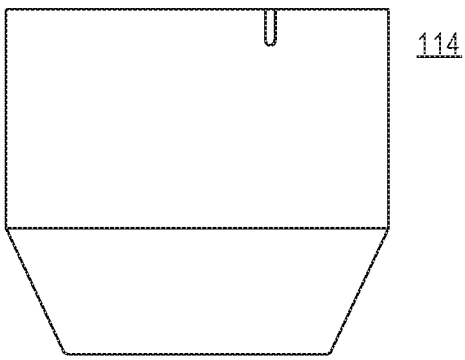


FIG. 3E

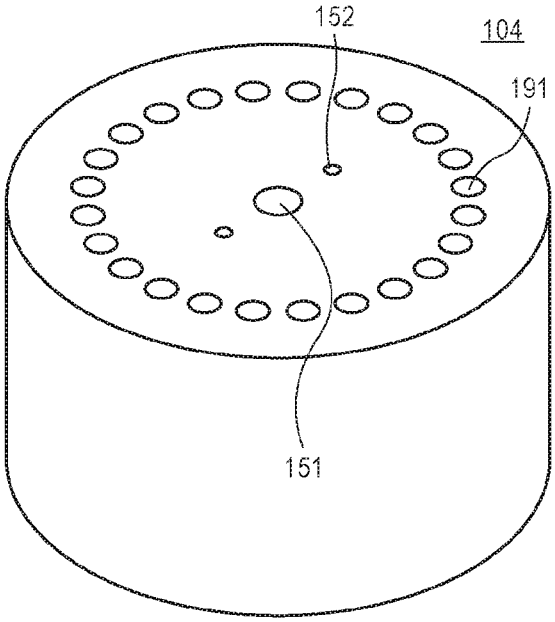


FIG. 4A

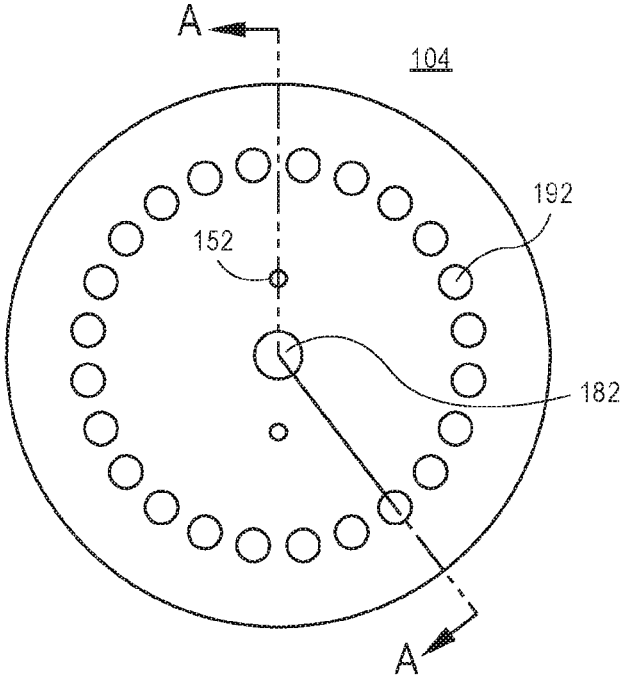
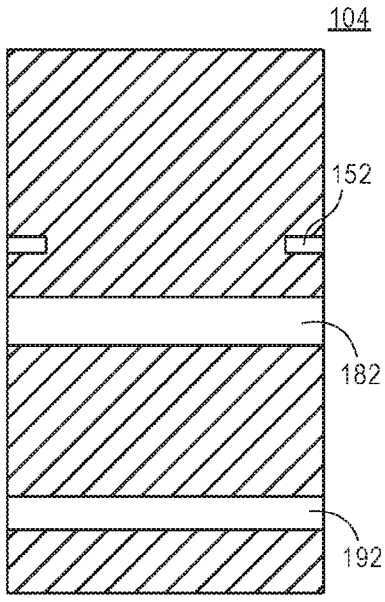


FIG. 4B



SECTION A-A

FIG. 4C

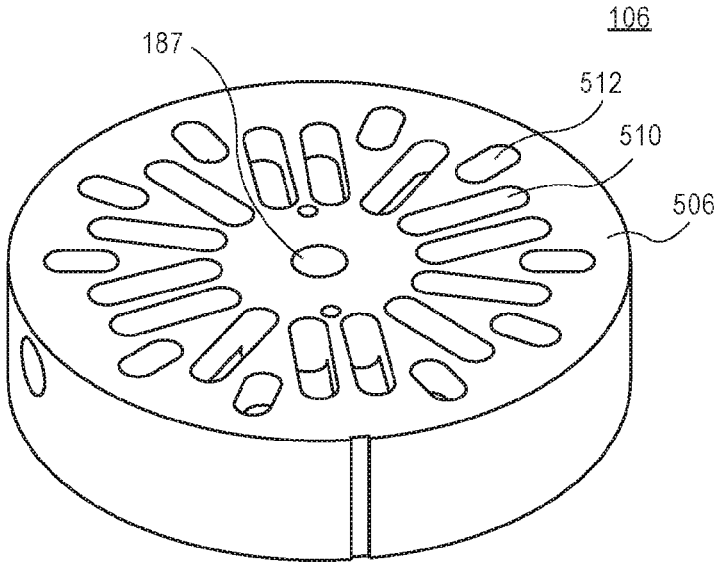


FIG. 5A

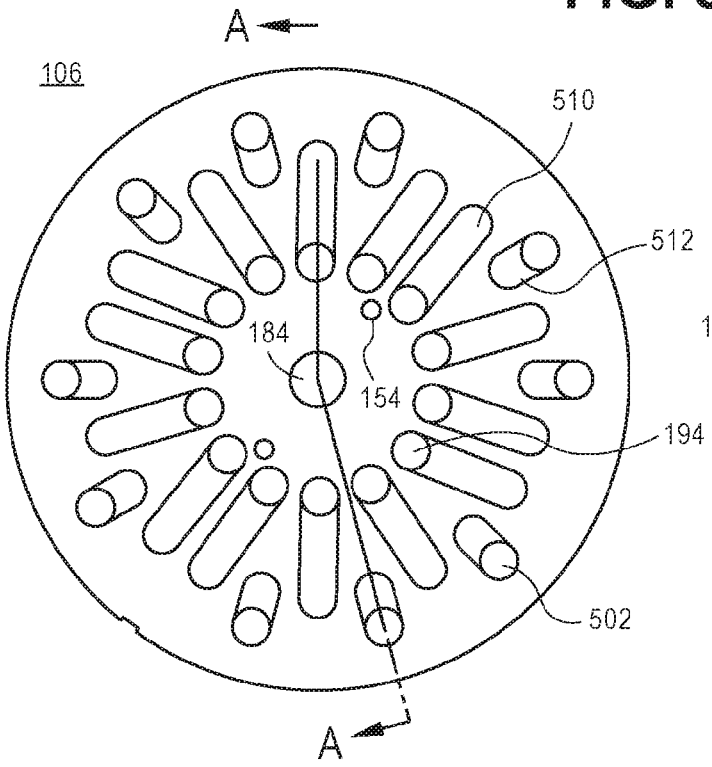


FIG. 5B

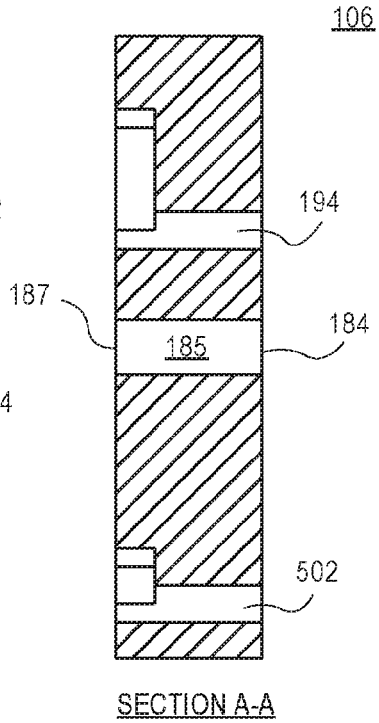


FIG. 5C

NOZZLE WITH ISOLATION PORTING

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Patent Application 62/294,892 filed on Feb. 12, 2016 which is incorporated herein.

[0002] This application is related to U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/253,736, filed Apr. 15, 2014, and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/220,546, filed Aug. 29, 2011, the disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Conventional beverage dispensing systems are commonly used in a wide variety of locales, including restaurants, snack bars, convenience stores, movie theaters, and any business where beverages are served. These beverage dispensing systems often dispense a variety of beverages of differing types and flavors, such as flavored carbonated sodas, iced tea, water, or even alcoholic beverages. Typically, such devices use a post mix dispenser that mixes a beverage additive (e.g., a flavored syrup) with a base beverage fluid (e.g., water or soda) before discharging through a discharge nozzle into a beverage container. Many such beverage dispensing systems, often referred to as a beverage tower, utilize a dedicated nozzle for each flavor or beverage. Since each nozzle typically require a minimum clearance around the discharge nozzle for placement of a beverage container under the nozzle, these configuration can result in relatively large devices. Often, the more beverages a device is configured to provide, the wider the device becomes. This can be problematic since often these devices are set-up in places of business to allow self-service by customers and larger devices are generally undesirable as they occupy valuable floor space.

[0004] To address this problem, multiple beverage dispensing devices that dispense beverages of differing types and flavors from a single discharge nozzle have been developed. Although conventional devices that use a single discharge nozzle to dispense multiple differing beverages can significantly reduce the amount of floor space dedicated to beverage dispensing, these devices present their own drawbacks.

[0005] One commonly encountered problem when dispensing differing beverages through a single discharge nozzle is cross-contamination and/or color carry-over between beverages. In cross-contamination, residual beverage additive from dispensing a first beverage left on one or more components within the discharge nozzle may contaminate a subsequently dispensed beverage. For example, residual lemon flavored additive may inadvertently mix with subsequently discharged water causing a noticeable, unpleasant taste or smell, or residual sugars from a "sugared" drink, such as a regular cola, could mix with a non-sugared drink, such as a diet beverage. In color carry-over, a residual coloring additive from one beverage may "carry over" or contaminate a subsequently discharged beverage leading to a discolored beverage. For example, when dispensing a beverage having darker coloring additives, such as a cola beverage, a residual amount of the cola colorant may contaminate and discolor a subsequently dispensed clear beverage, such as water or a lemon-lime soda, or a clear beverage may be contaminated with a red-colored beverage additive resulting in an undesirable red or pink colored beverage.

[0006] Another drawback is that the mixing of the beverage additive and beverage base within the nozzle may result in undesirable splashing or travel of residual beverage additive, particularly in a device that dispenses differing beverages from a single discharge nozzle. In attempting to avoid leaving residual beverage additive within the nozzle, multiple beverage dispensing devices may reduce mixing of the components within the nozzle, which may result in adequate mixing of the beverage additive and beverage base. The beverage additive and base beverage must be adequately mixed to ensure consistency and quality of the discharged beverage.

[0007] One problem associated with multiple beverage dispensing devices is that the viscosity of the beverage additive may contribute to the above noted contamination and cross-over problem. Dispensing of particularly viscous beverage additives, such as flavored syrups, may result in delayed dripping from the channel opening or transfer of residual droplets onto adjacent additive discharge orifices due to surface tension of the viscous beverage additive. Given the close proximity of the fluid channel openings, residual droplets of beverage additives can easily "travel" to an adjacent fluid channel opening, thereby resulting in contamination or color carry-over of a subsequently discharged beverage.

[0008] Accordingly, it is desirable to develop methods and systems that overcome the aforementioned deficiencies of conventional beverage dispensing devices. Embodiments of the invention, individually and/or collectively, provide for improved devices that address these and other problems associated with dispensing of multiple beverages.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] Embodiments provide beverage dispensing system comprising a diffuser block, a transition plate coupled to the diffuser block and an external port nozzle coupled to the transition plate. The diffuser block includes a primary outlet port configured to dispense a first beverage fluid and a plurality of secondary outlet ports disposed around the primary outlet port. The secondary outlet ports of the diffuser block are configured to dispense a second beverage fluid. The transition plate includes a plurality of channels provided on a top surface of the transition plate, and a plurality of outer outlet ports, provided on a bottom surface of the transition plate, in fluid communication with a first set of the channels of the transition plate. At least one of the plurality of channels is in fluid communication with at least one of the secondary outlet ports of the diffuser block for receiving the second beverage fluid. The external port nozzle includes a primary outlet port and a plurality of secondary outlet ports disposed around the primary outlet port. The secondary outlet ports of the external port nozzle are in fluid communication with one or more of the outer outlet ports of the transition plate. A portion of the second beverage fluid flows through the one or more of the outer outlet ports of the transition plate and the secondary outlet ports of the external port nozzle without being mixed with the first beverage fluid.

[0010] Embodiments also provide a beverage dispensing nozzle assembly comprising an external port nozzle, a diffuser assembly provided in a hollow cavity of the external

port nozzle and a transition plate coupled to a top surface of the external port nozzle. The external port nozzle includes a primary outlet port and at least one secondary outlet port provided on a bottom surface of the external port nozzle. The diffuser assembly is embedded within the external port nozzle. The transition plate is configured to receive a first beverage fluid and a second beverage fluid. A first portion of the second beverage fluid flows through at least one outer outlet port of the transition plate and at least one outlet port of the external port nozzle without being mixed with the first beverage fluid.

[0011] Embodiments further provide a transition plate configured to be coupled to a beverage diffuser block. The transition plate includes a primary inlet port provided on a top surface of the transition plate, the primary inlet configured to receive a first beverage fluid. The transition plate also includes a plurality of channels disposed around the primary inlet port, the plurality of channels are configured to receive a second beverage fluid. The transition plate also includes a primary outlet port provided on a bottom surface of the transition plate, the primary outlet port in fluid communication with the primary inlet port. The transition plate also includes a plurality of inner outlet ports disposed around the primary outlet port on the bottom surface of the transition plate, in fluid communication with a first set of the channels of the transition plate. The transition plate also includes a plurality of outer outlet ports disposed around the inner outlet ports, in fluid communication with a second set of the channels.

[0012] These and other embodiments of the invention are described in further detail below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. **1**A is an exploded side-perspective view of a beverage dispensing system according to many embodiments.

[0014] FIG. **1**B is an exploded front-perspective view of the beverage dispensing system according to many embodiments.

[0015] FIG. **1**C is an exploded back-perspective view of a beverage dispensing system according to many embodiments.

[0016] FIG. **2**A is a back-perspective view of the beverage dispensing system illustrated in FIGS. **1**A-**1**C in its assembled state according to many embodiments.

[0017] FIG. **2**B is a plan view of the beverage dispensing system illustrated in FIGS. **1**A-**1**C in its assembled state according to many embodiments.

[0018] FIG. **2**C is a front view of the beverage dispensing system illustrated in FIGS. **1**A-**1**C in its assembled state according to many embodiments.

[0019] FIG. **2**D is a side view of the beverage dispensing system illustrated in FIGS. **1**A-**1**C in its assembled state according to many embodiments.

[0020] FIG. **2**E is a back view of the beverage dispensing system illustrated in FIGS. **1**A-**1**C in its assembled state according to many embodiments.

[0021] FIG. **3**A is a bottom view of a first embodiment of the external port nozzle of the beverage dispensing system according to many embodiments.

[0022] FIG. **3**B is a cross-sectional view taken along section A-A of FIG. **3**A.

[0023] FIG. **3**C is a bottom view of a second embodiment of the external port nozzle of the beverage dispensing system according to many embodiments.

[0024] FIG. **3**D is a cross-sectional view taken along section B-B of FIG. **3**C.

[0025] FIG. **3**E illustrates a side view of the first embodiment of the external port nozzle of the beverage dispensing system as illustrated in FIG. **3**A or the second embodiment of the external port nozzle of the beverage dispensing system as illustrated in FIG. **3**C according to many embodiments.

[0026] FIG. **4**A is a perspective view of an extension element of the beverage dispensing system according to many embodiments.

[0027] FIG. **4**B is a bottom view of the extension element of the beverage dispensing system according to many embodiments.

[0028] FIG. **4**C is a cross-sectional view taken along section A-A of FIG. **4**B.

[0029] FIG. **5**A is a perspective view of a transition plate of the beverage dispensing system according to many embodiments.

[0030] FIG. **5**B is a bottom view of the transition plate of the beverage dispensing system according to many embodiments.

[0031] FIG. **5**C is a cross-sectional view taken along section A-A of FIG. **5**B.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Beverage Dispensing System

[0032] Embodiments are directed to a beverage dispensing system that is capable of dispensing a non-mixed fluid along with a post-mix fluid. The post-mix fluid is formed by mixing a base beverage (e.g. club soda) with at least one beverage additive (e.g. syrup). For example, the beverage dispensing system may dispense a post-mix fluid (e.g. cola) and a non-mixed fluid (e.g. spirits) separately. In some embodiments, the post-mix fluid may be dispensed simultaneously with the non-mixed fluid from separate fluid outlet ports (e.g. dispensing orifices of fluid channels). In other embodiments, the post-mix fluid may be dispensed from a first fluid outlet port (e.g. the outlet port of a first fluid channel) and, subsequently, the non-mixed fluid may be dispensed from a second fluid outlet port (e.g. the outlet port of a second fluid channel).

[0033] Referring to FIGS. **1**A-**1**C, some embodiments of a beverage dispensing system **100** include a diffuser block **102** located immediately upstream of an extension element **104**, a transition plate **106** and a diffuser assembly **108** provided within an external port nozzle **114**. One or more sealing rings **110**, **112** of various sizes may be provided to seal the coupling between the diffuser assembly **108** and the external port nozzle **114**. The sealing rings **110**, **112** may include O-rings for frictional assembly and sealing of the diffuser assembly **108** and/or the external port nozzle **114**. The sealing rings **110**, **112** may include an elastic or deformable material, such as a silicone, rubber, or polymer, to enhance sealing when the assembly is inserted into a beverage dispenser. It is appreciated that any number of sealing rings may be used, as well as various other interfacing or sealing features.

[0034] The diffuser block **102**, the extension element **104**, the transition plate **106**, the diffuser assembly **108** and the external port nozzle **114** may be coupled together via one or more alignment and/or attachment features **150**, **152**, **154**, **156** configured to engage with each other for proper assembly and attachment of the beverage dispensing system **100**. For example, the alignment and/or attachment feature **150** may be provided on the diffuser block **102**, the alignment and/or attachment feature **152** may be provided on the extension element **104**, the alignment and/or attachment feature **154** may be provided on the transition plate **106**, the alignment and/or attachment feature **156** may be provided on the diffuser assembly **108**. In some embodiments, the alignment and/or attachment features **150**, **152**, **154**, **156** may each include a hole that receivably engages a pin. When one or more pins are threaded through the alignment and/or attachment features **150**, **152**, **154**, **156**, the diffuser block **102**, the extension element **104**, the transition plate **106**, the diffuser assembly **108** and the external port nozzle **114** may stay coupled together.

[0035] The beverage dispensing system **100** may receive beverage fluids such as water from a water source (not shown), carbonated water from a carbonator (not shown), and/or one or more beverage additives from beverage additive sources (not shown) at receiving ports provided on a top surface of the diffuser block **102**. A beverage additive can be, for example, tea flavorings, coffee flavorings, vitamin shots, sweetener shots, concentrated soft drink syrups, etc. One or more beverage additives can be transferred from the beverage additive sources to the beverage dispensing system **100**. The one or more beverage sources can include bag-in-box systems, as will be understood by those of ordinary skill in the art. One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the beverage dispensing system **100** is not limited to the beverages and beverage sources discussed herein and may be used with other beverage fluids and other beverage sources.

[0036] The beverage dispensing system **100** may dispense one or more beverage fluids used to make a beverage. As used herein, a "beverage fluid" refers to any fluid constituent of a beverage, for example, a beverage additive, water, carbonated water, various types of alcoholic beverages, or any other beverage fluid constituent. The beverage dispensing system **100** can also be capable of dispensing a mixed beverage by mixing one or more beverage additives with a base beverage fluid such as non-carbonated water and/or carbonated water, or by mixing two or more beverages or beverage constituents together. The beverage dispensing system **100** can also be capable of dispensing a beverage that does not necessarily require mixing. For example, the beverage dispensing system **100** may dispense water, carbonated water, wine, beer, juice, spirits, premixed soft drinks or cocktails.

[0037] Additionally, the beverage dispensing system **100** may dispense carbonated beverages by adding carbon dioxide to a mixed beverage or by mixing carbonated water with a beverage additive. The beverage dispensing system **100** may dispense many different types of flavorings or beverage additives, flavored beverages, and mixed beverages. For instance, different tea flavorings can be provided to the beverage dispensing system **100** to create a variety of mixed tea beverages. The beverage dispensing system **100** may dispense various flavorings and beverages, including but not limited to water, tea, coffee, juices, energy drinks, vitamin-fortified beverages, sodas, beer, wine, spirits, or cocktails.

[0038] The diffuser block **102** of the beverage dispensing system **100** receives a plurality of beverage fluids at receiving ports provided on a top surface of the diffuser block **102**. The beverage fluids may be received from a corresponding plurality of supply lines. An exemplary diffuser block **102** is described in detail in the U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/220,546, filed Aug. 29, 2011, titled "Manifold System for Beverage Dispenser", the contents of which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

[0039] Dispensing of a post-mix beverage along with a non-mixed beverage is described next in connection with FIGS. **1**A-**1**C. According to various embodiments, a base fluid (e.g. a first beverage fluid) may be dispensed at a primary outlet **180** (e.g. a dispensing port of a fluid channel) provided on a bottom surface of the diffuser block **102**. The base fluid may flow through a primary outlet port **182** (e.g. a dispensing port of a fluid channel) provided on a bottom surface of the extension element **104** and a primary outlet port **184** provided on a bottom surface of the transition plate **106**. The primary outlet ports **180**, **182** and **184** are in fluid communication with each other. For example, the primary outlet ports **180**, **182** and **184** may be aligned with each other.

[0040] As used herein, the bottom surface may refer to the surface of a structural element facing vertically downward in a vertical direction (e.g. in the gravitational direction). As used herein, a fluid channel terminates in an outlet port (e.g. a through hole), substantially perpendicular to the plane of the components of the beverage dispensing system **100**, such that it is substantially vertical in use.

[0041] At least one beverage additive (e.g. a second beverage fluid) may be dispensed at one or more of the plurality of secondary outlet ports **190** provided on the bottom surface of the diffuser block **102**. According to various embodiments, the secondary outlet ports **190** may be disposed around the primary outlet port **180** of the diffuser block **102**. For example, the secondary outlet ports **190** may be radially disposed around the primary outlet port **180**. The beverage additive(s) may flow through one or more of the plurality of secondary outlet ports **192** of the extension element **104** and one or more of the plurality of inner outlet ports **194** of the transition plate **106**. The outlet ports **190**, **192** and **194** are in fluid communication with each other. According to various embodiments, the secondary outlet ports **192** may be disposed around the primary outlet port **182** provided on a bottom surface of the extension element **104**. For example, the secondary outlet ports **192** may be radially disposed around the primary outlet port **182**. According to various embodiments, the inner outlet ports **194** may be disposed around the primary outlet port **184** provided on a bottom surface of the transition plate **106**. For example, the inner outlet ports **194** may be radially disposed around the primary outlet port **184**.

[0042] The base beverage (e.g. the first beverage fluid) and the beverage additive (e.g. the second beverage fluid) may be provided to and mixed within the diffuser assembly **108** into a post-mix beverage fluid. The post-mix beverage fluid (e.g. the mixture of the base fluid and the beverage additive (s)) may be dispensed at fluid outlet ports **196** of the diffuser assembly **108**. An exemplary diffuser assembly **108** is described in detail in the U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/253,736, filed Apr. 15, 2014, titled "Dispense Point

Isolation Device", the contents of which is incorporated herein in its entirety. The post-mix beverage may be dispensed through a primary outlet port **308** provided at a bottom surface of the external port nozzle **114**.

[0043] As illustrated in FIG. **1**C, according to various embodiments, a non-mixed beverage (e.g. a second beverage fluid) may be dispensed at one or more of the secondary outlet ports **190** of the diffuser block **102**. The non-mixed beverage may flow through one or more of the secondary outlet ports **192** of the extension element **104** corresponding to (e.g. in fluid communication with) the one or more secondary outlet ports **190** of the diffuser block **102**. The non-mixed beverage may also flow through one or more of the outer channels **512** provided on a top surface **506** of the transition plate **106** and one or more of the outer outlet ports **502** provided on a bottom surface of the of the transition plate **106**. As discussed in greater detail in connection with FIGS. **5**A-**5**C, the outer channels **512** provided on the top surface **506** of the transition plate **106** correspond to (e.g. are in fluid communication with) the one or more secondary outlet ports **192** of the extension element **104**. The outer outlet ports **502** provided on the bottom surface **508** of the transition plate **106** correspond to (e.g. are in fluid communication with) one or more inlet ports **336** of the external port nozzle **114**.

[0044] Accordingly, the non-mixed beverage may be dispensed through one or more fluid outlet ports **306** of the external port nozzle **114** before, simultaneously with, or after the post-mix beverage is dispensed through the primary outlet port **308** of the external port nozzle **114**. As discussed in greater detail in connection with FIGS. **3**A-**3**E, the primary outlet port **308** of the external port nozzle receives the post-mix beverage fluid (e.g. the mixture of the base fluid and the beverage additive(s)) may be dispensed from the fluid outlet ports **196** of the diffuser assembly **108**.

[0045] Referring back to FIGS. **1**A-**1**C, according to various embodiments, the diffuser assembly **108** may be coupled to the external port nozzle **114** via a coupling system (e.g. a bayonet lock) provided on the outer surface of the diffuser assembly **108**. The external port nozzle **114** may be shaped and dimensioned to receive the diffuser assembly **108** therein. That is, the external port nozzle **114** may include a cavity that is configured to receive the diffuser assembly **108**. Sealing rings **110**, **112** may be provided around the diffuser assembly **108** to seal the coupling between the diffuser assembly **108** and the external port nozzle **114**.

[0046] FIGS. **2**A-**2**E illustrate the beverage dispensing system **100** in an assembled state such that the diffuser block **102**, the extension element **104**, the transition plate **106**, the diffuser assembly **108** and the external port nozzle **114** are all coupled together. The diffuser assembly **108** fits into the external post nozzle **114** such that the diffuser assembly **108** is provided within the external port nozzle **114** and, as such, is not shown in FIGS. **2**A-**2**E.

External Port Nozzle

[0047] FIGS. **3**A-**3**B illustrate a first exemplary embodiment **302** of the external port nozzle **114** of the beverage dispensing system **100**. FIGS. **3**D-**3**E illustrate the second embodiment **304** of the external port nozzle **114** of the beverage dispensing system **100**. FIG. **3**E illustrates a side view of the first embodiment **302** or the second embodiment **304** of the external port nozzle **114**. After the post-mix beverage is dispensed through the outlet ports **196** of the diffuser assembly **108**, its flow can be partially or completely directed by the primary outlet port **308** of the external port nozzle **114** into a cup or other container (not shown). The external port nozzle **114** may be designed to minimize splash, splatter, and overspray of the dispensed beverage.

[0048] The external port nozzle **114** includes a plurality of fluid inlet ports **336** to direct a flow of the non-mixed fluid received from the outer outlet ports **502** of the transition plate **106**. The fluid inlet ports **336** may be arranged in a radial array near an outside circumference of a top surface of the external port nozzle **114**. A plurality of secondary outlet ports **306** that direct a flow of the non-mixed fluid may be formed at a bottom surface of the external port nozzle **114**. The secondary outlet ports **306** may be arranged in a radial array near an outside circumference of the bottom surface of the external port nozzle **114**. The secondary outlet ports **306** may be disposed radially around a primary outlet port **308**. In some embodiments, the primary outlet port **308** may have a larger opening than each of the secondary outlet ports **306**. The primary outlet port **308** may direct a flow of the post-mix fluid formed in the diffuser assembly **108** by mixing the base beverage with one or more beverage additives, as described above.

[0049] A given fluid inlet port **336** may be connected to a corresponding secondary outlet port **306** via a fluid channel. The fluid channel may be formed of a plurality of fluid channel portions **316** and **326**. According to some embodiments, a first fluid channel portion **316** may be placed at an angle and a second fluid channel portion **326** may be straight to conform to the shape of the external port nozzle **114**. The first fluid channel portion **316** and the second fluid channel portion **326** may form a continuous fluid path for the fluid from the fluid inlet port **336** toward the secondary outlet port **306**.

[0050] The number of the fluid inlet ports **336** (and corresponding secondary outlet ports **306**) provided on the first exemplary embodiment **302** may be different than the number of the fluid inlet ports **336** (and corresponding secondary outlet ports **306**) provided on the second exemplary embodiment **304**. In some embodiments, the number of the fluid inlet ports **336** of the external port nozzle **114** may be equivalent to the number of outer outlet ports **502** of the transition plate **106**. Other than the number of the fluid inlet ports **336** (and corresponding secondary outlet ports **306**), the structure of the first embodiment **302** and the second embodiment **304** of the external port nozzle **114** may be substantially similar.

[0051] The external port nozzle **114** is sized and dimensioned to receive the diffuser assembly **108** in an internal cavity (e.g. hollow chamber) **312** of the external port nozzle **114**. In some embodiments, the diffuser assembly **108** may be completely embedded within the external port nozzle **114**. The interior surface of the external port nozzle **114** (e.g. the wall of the internal cavity **312**) may be structured to couple to the diffuser assembly **108** using a bayonet lock connector. According to various embodiments, the external port nozzle **114** may include surface features **309** for engaging the locking features of the diffuser assembly **108**. In some embodiments, the diffuser assembly **108** may be coupled to the external port nozzle **114** via twist-lock features. According to various embodiments, one or more sealing ring(s) **110** may be provided between an inner surface of the external port nozzle **114** and an outer surface of the diffuser assembly **108**.

[0052] As provided above, the diffuser assembly **108** may be configured to mix the base beverage (e.g. the first beverage fluid) received from the primary outlet port **184** of the transition plate **106** and the beverage additive (e.g. the second beverage fluid) received from the inner outlet ports **194** of the transition plate **106**. Accordingly, the outlet port(s) **196** of the diffuser assembly **180** dispenses a post-mix beverage comprising the first beverage fluid and the second beverage fluid (as illustrated in FIG. **1**C). The post-mix beverage is dispensed at the primary outlet port **308** of the external port nozzle **114**.

[0053] In addition to dispensing the post-mix beverage at the primary outlet port **308**, the external port nozzle is also configured to dispense a portion of the beverage additive or a non-mix beverage (e.g. the second beverage fluid) at the secondary outlet ports **306** of the external port nozzle **114** without mixing the beverage additive or a non-mix beverage with the base beverage or the post-mix beverage (as illustrated in FIG. **1**C). The portion of the beverage additive or a non-mix beverage (e.g. the second beverage fluid) may be received at the inlet ports **336** of the external port nozzle **114** from the outer outlet ports **502** of the transition plate **106**. That is, the inlet ports **336** of the external port nozzle **114** are in fluid communication with the outer outlet ports **502** of the transition plate **106**. According to various embodiments, one or more sealing ring(s) **112** may be provided between an inlet port **336** of the external port nozzle **114** and an outer outlet port **502** of the transition plate **106**.

Extension Element

[0054] FIGS. **4**A-**4**C illustrate an extension element **104** (e.g. an extension plate, extension block, etc.) of the beverage dispensing system **100** according to many embodiments. The extension element **104** may have a custom-defined length based on the various end uses of the beverage dispensing system **100**. In some embodiments, the extension element **104** may have variable length. For example, the extension element **104** may be a telescopic element having concentric tubular elements that may extend or retract in length. The extension element **104** may serve to increase the distance between the diffuser block **102** and the external port nozzle **114**. That is, the transition plate **106** may be coupled to the diffuser block **102** via the extension element **104**. For example, such configuration may reduce a distance between the external port nozzle **114** and a counter surface where the beverage dispensing system **100** is placed. Accordingly, the extension element **104** reduces the splash, splatter, and overspray of the dispensed beverage by bringing the external port nozzle **114** closer to a container that will receive the dispensed beverage.

[0055] The extension element **104** may serve to transfer the fluid dispensed from the diffuser block **102** to the transition plate **106**. The extension element **104** may include a primary inlet port **151** provided on a top surface of the extension element **104**. The primary inlet port **151** may be in fluid communication with the primary outlet port **180** of the diffuser block **102**. extension element **104** may include a plurality of secondary inlet ports **191** provided around the primary inlet port **151** on the top surface of the extension element **104**. The secondary inlet ports **191** may be in fluid communication with the secondary outlet ports **190** of the diffuser block **102**. The extension element **104** may include a primary outlet port **182** provided on a bottom surface of the extension element **104**. The primary outlet port **182** is in fluid communication with the primary inlet port **187** of the extension element **104**. The extension element **104** may include a plurality of secondary outlet ports **192** provided on the bottom surface of the extension element **104**. The plurality of secondary outlet ports **192** of the extension element **104** are in fluid communication with the plurality of inlet channels **510**-**512** of the extension element **106**. In some embodiments, the extension element **104** may include one or more alignment and/or attachment features **152** on the top surface and/or the bottom surface for coupling to the diffuser block **102** and/or the transition plate **106**, respectively.

Transition Plate

[0056] FIGS. **5**A-**5**C illustrate an exemplary transition plate **106** according to many embodiments. The transition plate **106** includes a top surface **506** facing the extension element **104** and a bottom surface **508** (illustrated in FIG. **1**A) facing the external port nozzle **114**. The bottom surface **508** includes a plurality of inner fluid outlet ports (e.g. fluid flow passages) **194** radially disposed around a primary fluid outlet port (e.g. fluid flow passage) **184**. The primary outlet port **184** may be the dispensing orifice of a fluid channel **185** provided substantially at the center of the transition plate **106**. The bottom surface **508** further includes a plurality of outer fluid outlet ports (e.g. fluid flow passages) **502** radially disposed around the inner fluid outlet ports **194**. The top surface **506** of the transition plate **106** includes a plurality of long channels (e.g. grooves) **510** and a plurality of short channels (e.g. grooves) **512** radially disposed around a primary inlet port **187** of the transition plate **106**.

[0057] Each one of the secondary outlet ports **192** of the extension element **104** corresponds to (e.g. is in fluid communication with) one of the channels **510** and **512** provided on the top surface **506** of the transition plate **106**. A first portion of the fluid dispensed from the secondary outlet ports **192** of the extension element **104** may be received at the long channels **510** of the transition plate **106**, and may be passed to one or more of inner fluid outlet ports **194** of the transition plate **106**. For example, a first portion of the one or more beverage additives (e.g. second beverage fluid) dispensed at the secondary outlet ports **190** of the diffuser block **102** may pass through the secondary outlet ports **192** of the extension element **104**, and may be received at the long channels **510** of the transition plate **106**. The first portion of the one or more beverage additives may flow through each long channel **510** toward an inner outlet port **194** of the transition plate **106** to be provided to the secondary inlet ports **111** of the diffuser assembly **108** (as illustrated in FIG. **1**C) to be mixed with the base fluid received at the primary inlet port **155** of the diffuser assembly **108**. The post-mix beverage may be dispensed at the outlet ports **196** of the diffuser assembly **108** and the primary outlet port **308** of the external port nozzle **114**.

[0058] On the other hand, a second portion of one or more beverage additives (e.g. second beverage fluid) dispensed at the secondary outlet ports **190** of the diffuser block **102** may pass through the secondary outlet ports **192** of the extension element **104**, and may be received at the short channels **512** of the transition plate **106**. The second portion of the one or more beverage additives may flow through each short channel **512** toward an outer fluid outlet port **502** of the transition plate **106** to be provided to the inlet ports **336** of external port nozzle **114** (as illustrated in FIG. **1**C) to be dispensed at

the secondary outlets **306** of the external port nozzle **114** before, after or concurrently with the post-mix beverage dispensed at the primary outlet **308** of the external port nozzle **114**.

[0059] For example, the non-mixed fluid may be dispensed at the secondary outlet ports **190** of the diffuser block **102**, pass through the secondary outlet ports **192** of the extension element **104**, and may be received at the short channels **512** of the transition plate **106**. Since the non-mixed fluid will not be mixed with the base beverage or other fluids in the diffuser assembly **108**, the non-mixed fluid is not provided to the diffuser assembly **108**. Rather, the outer fluid outlet ports **502** of the transition plate **106** provide the non-mixed fluid directly to the fluid inlet ports **336** of the external port nozzle **114**. The non-mixed fluid by-passes the diffuser assembly **108** and reaches the fluid inlet ports **336** of the external port nozzle **114** directly from the outer fluid outlet ports **502** of the transition plate **106**.

[0060] The transition plate **106** allows the beverage dispensing system **100** to dispense a post-mix beverage fluid at the primary fluid outlet port **308** of the external port nozzle **114** and a non-mixed beverage fluid at the one or more of the secondary outlet ports **306** of the external port nozzle **114** without having cross-contamination between the post-mix beverage fluid and the non-mixed beverage fluid. According to various embodiments, the non-mixed beverage fluid may be dispensed before, after or at the same time as (e.g. concurrently with) the post-mix beverage fluid.

[0061] In many embodiments, the external port nozzle disclosed above is configured to enable dispensing both post-mix and premix beverages from one (e.g. a single) nozzle assembly. For example, in some embodiments, the device may include a transition plate configured to couple with a conventional dispensing array, so that a user can improve an existing dispensing system through incorporation of a device in accordance with the present invention. Although in many embodiments, the external port nozzle is a separate component, it is appreciated that the features of the nozzle with isolation porting may be integrated with and/or incorporated into the diffuser assembly in a variety of ways, in accordance with the principles of the present invention.

[0062] The above description is illustrative and is not restrictive. A recitation of "a", "an" or "the" is intended to mean "one or more" unless specifically indicated to the contrary. Many variations of the disclosure will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon review of the disclosure. One or more features from any embodiment described herein may be combined with one or more features of any other embodiment without departing from the scope of the disclosure. The scope of the disclosure should, therefore, be determined not with reference to the above description, but instead should be determined with reference to the pending claims along with their full scope or equivalents.

1. A beverage dispensing system, comprising:

a diffuser block having a primary outlet port configured to dispense a first beverage fluid and a plurality of secondary outlet ports disposed around the primary outlet port, the secondary outlet ports configured to dispense a second beverage fluid;

a transition plate coupled to the diffuser block, the transition plate including:

a plurality of channels provided on a top surface of the transition plate, wherein at least one of the plurality of channels is in fluid communication with at least one of the secondary outlet ports of the diffuser block for receiving the second beverage fluid, and

a plurality of outer outlet ports, provided on a bottom surface of the transition plate, in fluid communication with a first set of the channels of the transition plate; and

an external port nozzle coupled to the transition plate, wherein the external port nozzle includes a primary outlet port and a plurality of secondary outlet ports disposed around the primary outlet port, wherein the secondary outlet ports of the external port nozzle are in fluid communication with one or more of the outer outlet ports of the transition plate,

wherein a first portion of the second beverage fluid is configured to flowthrough the one or more of the outer outlet ports of the transition plate and the secondary outlet ports of the external port nozzle without being mixed with the first beverage fluid,

wherein the transition plate further comprises:

a primary inlet port provided on the top surface of the transition plate, wherein the plurality of channels are disposed around the primary inlet port, wherein the primary inlet port is in fluid communication with the primary outlet port of the diffuser block for receiving the first beverage fluid;

a primary outlet port, provided on the bottom surface of the transition plate, in fluid communication with the primary inlet port of the transition plate; and

a plurality of inner outlet ports disposed around the primary outlet port on the bottom surface of the transition plate, in fluid communication with a second set of the channels of the transition plate, wherein the outer outlet ports are provided around the inner outlet ports.

2. (canceled)

3. The beverage dispensing system of claim **1**, further comprising:

an extension element provided between the diffuser block and the transition plate such that the transition plate is coupled to the diffuser block via the extension element.

4. The beverage dispensing system of claim **3**, wherein the extension element includes:

a primary inlet port provided on a top surface of the extension element, wherein the primary inlet port is in fluid communication with the primary outlet port of the diffuser block,

a plurality of secondary inlet ports provided around the primary inlet port on the top surface of the extension element, wherein the secondary inlet ports are in fluid communication with the secondary outlet ports of the diffuser block,

a primary outlet port provided on a bottom surface of the extension element, wherein the primary outlet port is in fluid communication with the primary inlet port of the extension element, and

a plurality of secondary outlet ports provided on the bottom surface of the extension element, wherein the plurality of secondary outlet ports are in fluid communication with the plurality of channels of the extension element.

5. The beverage dispensing system of claim 4, wherein the secondary outlet ports of the extension element are in fluid communication with the channels provided on the top surface of the transition plate.

6. The beverage dispensing system of claim 1, wherein the transition plate is configured to provide the first portion of the second beverage fluid received at the first set of the channels to the outer outlet ports of the transition plate and a second portion of the second beverage fluid received at the second set of the channels to the inner outlet ports of the transition plate.

7. The beverage dispensing system of claim 1, further comprising:

a diffuser assembly provided in a hollow cavity of the external port nozzle such that the diffuser assembly is embedded within the external port nozzle, wherein the diffuser assembly is configured to mix the first beverage fluid received from the primary outlet port of the transition plate and the second beverage fluid received from the inner outlet ports of the transition plate such that an outlet port of the diffuser assembly dispenses a post-mix beverage comprising the first beverage fluid and the second beverage fluid.

8. The beverage dispensing system of claim 7, further comprising:

at least one sealing ring provided between an inner surface of the external port nozzle and an outer surface of the diffuser assembly.

9. The beverage dispensing system of claim 1, wherein the external port nozzle includes a plurality of inlet ports provided on a top surface of the external port nozzle, the inlet ports being in fluid communication with the outer outlet ports of the transition plate.

10. The beverage dispensing system of claim 9, further comprising:

a sealing ring provided between one of the inlet ports of the external port nozzle and one of the outer outlet ports of the transition plate.

11. A beverage dispensing nozzle assembly comprising:

an external port nozzle having a primary outlet port and at least one secondary outlet port provided on a bottom surface of the external port nozzle;

a diffuser assembly provided in a hollow cavity of the external port nozzle such that the diffuser assembly is embedded within the external port nozzle; and

a transition plate coupled to a top surface of the external port nozzle, wherein the transition plate is configured to receive a first beverage fluid and a second beverage fluid,

wherein a first portion of the second beverage fluid is configured to flow through at least one outer outlet port of the transition plate and at least one outlet port of the external port nozzle without being mixed with the first beverage fluid,

wherein the transition plate includes:

a primary inlet port provided on a top surface of the transition plate, wherein the primary inlet port is configured to receive the first beverage fluid;

a primary outlet port, provided on a bottom surface of the transition plate, in fluid communication with the primary inlet port of the transition plate;

a plurality of channels, disposed around the primary inlet port, provided on the top surface of the transition plate, wherein at least one of the plurality of channels is configured to receive the second beverage fluid;

a plurality of inner outlet ports provided around the primary outlet port, the inner outlet ports in fluid communication with a first set of the channels; and

a plurality of outer outlet ports provided around the inner outlet ports, the inner outlet ports in fluid communication with a second set of the channels, wherein the outer outlet ports include the at least one outer outlet port.

12. (canceled)

13. The beverage dispensing nozzle assembly of claim 11, wherein the external port nozzle includes:

a primary outlet port, and

a plurality of secondary outlet ports disposed around the primary outlet port, wherein the secondary outlet ports of the external port nozzle are in fluid communication with the at least one outer outlet port of the transition plate.

14. The beverage dispensing nozzle assembly of claim 11, further comprising:

an extension element coupled to a top surface of the transition plate, such that the transition plate is configured to couple to a diffuser block via the extension element.

15. The beverage dispensing nozzle assembly of claim 11, wherein the transition plate is configured to provide the first portion of the second beverage fluid received at the first set of the channels to the outer outlet ports of the transition plate and a second portion of the second beverage fluid received at the second set of the channels to the inner outlet ports of the transition plate.

16. The beverage dispensing nozzle assembly of claim 11, wherein the external port nozzle includes a plurality of inlet ports provided on a top surface of the external port nozzle, the inlet ports being in fluid communication with the outer outlet ports of the transition plate.

17. A transition plate configured to be coupled to a beverage diffuser block, comprising:

a primary inlet port provided on a top surface of the transition plate, the primary inlet configured to receive a first beverage fluid;

a plurality of channels disposed around the primary inlet port, the plurality of channels are configured to receive a second beverage fluid;

a primary outlet port provided on a bottom surface of the transition plate, the primary outlet port in fluid communication with the primary inlet port;

a plurality of inner outlet ports disposed around the primary outlet port on the bottom surface of the transition plate, in fluid communication with a first set of the channels of the transition plate, and

a plurality of outer outlet ports disposed around the inner outlet ports, in fluid communication with a second set of the channels.

18. The transition plate of claim 18, wherein the transition plate is configured to provide the first portion of the second beverage fluid received at the first set of the channels to the outer outlet ports of the transition plate and a second portion of the second beverage fluid received at the second set of the channels to the inner outlet ports of the transition plate.

19. The transition plate of claim 18, wherein the first set of the channels have a larger opening on the top surface of the transition plate than the second set of the channels.

20. The transition plate of claim **18**, wherein the first set of the channels and the second set of channels are provided in a radially alternating manner.

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